



DONALD TUCKER
COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE
NEWARK, N. J. 07102

CITY HALL OFFICE
733-6427

November 27, 1985

Dear Member of the Newark Collaboration Group:

I am writing to provide you with an analysis prepared by my office of the recently disseminated report on Newark neighborhood revitalization.

Enclosed please find an unedited copy of my letter to the 'Newark This Week' section of The Star-Ledger which embodies the critical analysis.

Since we are aware that members of the Newark Collaboration Group have received brief synopses of the report, we believe it important for you to receive a response before any premises or conclusions of the report are transformed into the conventional wisdom of our day.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 733-6427.

Many thanks for your attention to this matter.

Regards,



Donald Tucker
Councilman-at-Large



DONALD TUCKER
COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE
NEWARK, N. J. 07102

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733-6427

November 26, 1985

Ms. Barbara Kukla
Office of the Editor
'Newark This Week'
The Star-Ledger
Star-Ledger Plaza
Newark, New Jersey 07102

To The Editor:

The 'Newark This Week' section of The Star-Ledger has publicized for the past two weeks the report on neighborhood revitalization recently commissioned by the Fund for New Jersey.

While the report attempts to deal with some unquestionably critical issues affecting Newark's future, a careful reading reveals that it is replete with subjective impressions of individual interviews, unattributed to any specific sources, with sweeping generalizations unsupported by any documentation, and with many statements inconsistent with the facts.

These persistent problems may have resulted from the lack of a research design that could be objectively evaluated by professionals in the field. Absent such a design with pre-tested components, we are left with a host of quotations reflecting different people's biases as interpreted by an author whose own vantage point is also unknown to readers.

Since a survey questionnaire was mailed out by the report's author several months ago, why weren't the questionnaire and a tabulation of responses included in the report? Further, the report contains no charts, tables, nor graphs with statistical information that might support any of its subjective conjectures.

In addition, we are not told what criteria were utilized in selecting the individuals who were interviewed and whose subjective views permeate the report. (We note that the representatives of community-based neighborhood organizations who do appear on the interview list are primarily from organizations operating in areas on the outer periphery of the City instead of organizations operating in core areas of the City which also happen to be predominantly Black and Hispanic. Relatively under-represented are community organizations whose top administrators and whose Board members with fiduciary responsibility are of Minority ethnic groups.)

There are broad generalizations offered regarding Newark's school system but apparently no one involved with public education was interviewed. Similarly, there are statements regarding the proper role of churches in the City, but very few religious leaders were consulted; there are statements about crime, but no one from the criminal justice system or its supporting network of juvenile crime prevention agencies was interviewed.

A prime cause for concern regarding the objectivity of the entire report is the disproportionate share of those who were interviewed from among the academic-business-foundation elite and a corresponding under-representation of other segments (no civil rights groups, no tenant leaders, no journalists, very few grassroots people).

Some of the other weaknesses we discerned in the report included:

- *The general assertion that there exists "no Black middle class" in Newark is offered as a major premise without any analysis or documentation to support such a thesis. (As will be documented later in this letter, the premise appears to be directly contrary to the facts.)

- *While discussing Newark's population figures, the report maintains that 18.4 percent of the City's residents counted by the 1980 U.S. Census "are classified as other (mostly Asian and Pacific Islanders)", a statement unsupported by any census data we have seen.

- *There is no suggestion that Newark's low income population is comprised of any White residents whatsoever, even though the 1979 Census survey reported 21,558 White residents with incomes below the poverty level in 1979. (Taken as a whole, the percentage of poor White residents vs. the percentage of poor Black residents in Newark in 1979 constituted less than a 17.5 percent differential.)

- *A general unfamiliarity with Newark, its neighborhoods, its institutions, and its residents is betrayed throughout the report.

- *Many of the report's conclusions are vague and superficial. ("Some are, some aren't," "some do, and some don't," "For some, yes; for others, no," and "perhaps yes, perhaps no," Pages 120 and 128.)

A major premise of the report is a flat assertion that there exists "no Black middle class" in Newark. Having accepted this thesis based on an anonymous quote, the author moves to the conclusion that the City suffers from "a lack of leadership," especially from Black community leaders. (Pages 17-19)

In fact, there are Black middle class, White middle class, and Hispanic middle class residents in Newark. Of those families reported by the Census as earning more than \$25,000 per year in 1979, there were 6,785 White families, 5,247 Black families, and 1,927 Hispanic families. (The differential in absolute numbers of such families between White and Black Newarkers was less than 13 percent.)

We must all be careful to avoid perpetuating inaccurate stereotypes of Newark and its resident population. One that is often publicized by outside media suggests that New Jersey's largest city is comprised only of poor Black and Hispanic residents, usually on some form of public assistance, and enterprising White middle class residents solely responsible for economic revitalization efforts in the City. Yet the facts belie such an impression.

Besides the close proximity of relative income levels for Black and White residents of Newark, there are other data strongly suggesting the existence of an emerging Black middle class in Newark today.

For example, 17.1 percent of employed residents 16 years of age or over who were counted by the U.S. Census Bureau in the 73 census tracts with the most Black residents were working in managerial and professional specialty occupations during 1979 (9,789 individuals of a total of 57,319).

Of the 94,237 Black residents of Newark 25 years of age or over recorded by the Census Bureau in 1980, 30,689, or 32.6 percent, had completed high school, and 15,459, or 16.4 percent, had gone on to college. (This contrasted with 9,495 White residents, or 13.9 percent, who had attained some college and 26,971 White residents, or 39.5 percent, who completed high school.)

One function of leadership is to defend positively the legitimate interests of Newark. As the report itself notes often, it is important that community leaders, elected officials, and others with a stake in Newark's future work to protect Newark's image from distortions and prejudices.

It is thus highly unfortunate that this report, based on a collection of anonymous opinions synthesized into one mishmash of undocumented suppositions, could very well be used by some to further damage Newark's

image at a time when true neighborhood revitalization presents valid opportunities for all Newark residents.

This report can be seen as another example of attitudes toward Newark, based on negative stereotypes, enunciated in the general media over the last several years. We are reminded of the New Jersey TV show, 'The Way We Are,' which contrasted White entrepreneurs in Ironbound with Black welfare families, totally ignoring Black middle class homeowners or White poor people in Newark.

(Echoes of this bias can be found in the current report: "Ironbound provides a model of a healthy neighborhood. Its health is the cumulative result of many social and economic factors--most rooted in the cultural traditions of the area's residents... In areas where the culture and families do not include these community-oriented values and commitments among the majority of residents, a new spirit of commitment and cohesion must be created." Page 32.) This quotation, with its suggestion that only certain ethnic groups found in the Ironbound possess the necessary cultural tradition to foster economic development in their own neighborhoods, is not only racially biased but also unnecessarily foments ethnic tensions in Newark as it invites resentment from all other ethnic groups in Newark.

It is ironic that funding for 'The Way We Are,' which drew such widespread criticism for its stereotypical views from both Black and White leaders throughout New Jersey, was also provided by the very same Fund for New Jersey that commissioned the current report.

A recent article in the New Jersey Reporter dwelling on reminiscences of Newark's past appears to promote White middle class gentrification as key to the City's social and economic revival, largely ignoring the interests and aspirations of a majority of Newark residents. 'Newark's Failing Dream,' another subjective view from a New York perspective, appeared in The New York Times Magazine section in October of 1983 and there have been occasional snipes at Newark in the Bergen Record of recent years ('Newark: Quietly Wasting Away,' May, 1980).

The danger is that this report, as unscholarly and unrepresentative as it is, has cost some influential people a tidy sum of money, and they may now feel that they must demonstrate they got their money's worth by citing the report as some kind of seminal thinking about Newark's future.

Suggestions in the report to the effect that most community-based organizations in Newark somehow lack the capability to manage revitalization efforts in their own neighborhoods, or should be confined to a

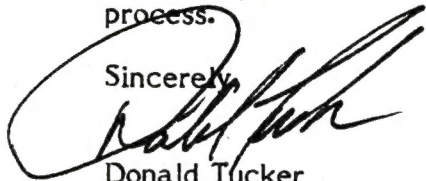
role of advising some un-named central planning and coordinating grouping, also contain dangerous suppositions for Newark's future progress. Who will provide this coordination and control? And to whom are they accountable?

To be sure, foundations have a legitimate role in contributing to Newark's future. We need their good will, their expertise, and their funding. But not in the role of coordinators seeking to control our future.

Rather, the role of foundation executives should be as partners of community leaders, elected officials, and all others with a stake in Newark's future. Accountability is still a critical element in any objective planning process.

I hope that this analysis of 'Neighborhood Revitalization in Newark: Perspectives and Prospects' proves helpful to all who would share in that process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donald Tucker', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Donald Tucker
Councilman-at-Large

NEWARK LIBRARIANA Misc Municipal Council

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These persistent problems may have resulted from the ^{lack} ~~absence~~ of a

research design that could have been objectively evaluated by professionals in the field prior to implementation. About such^a design with pre-tested components, we are left with a host of quotations reflecting different people's biases as interpreted by an author whose own ~~background~~ vantage point is also unknown to readers.

The report contains no charts, tables, nor graphs with statistical information that might support any of its subjective conjectures.

In addition, we are not told what, if any, criteria were utilized in selecting the individuals who were interviewed and whose subjective views permeate the report.

(We note that the ~~so~~ representatives of community-based neighborhood organizations who do appear on the interview list are primarily from organizations operating ~~on~~ in areas on the outer periphery of the city ~~areas~~ ^{instead of} ~~organizations operating in core areas of the~~ of the city which also happen to be predominantly ^{more} ~~Black~~. Very few organizations with both top administrators and ~~and~~ Board members with fiduciary responsibilities who are ^{more} ~~Black~~ were represented.)

INSERT A

Some of the other weaknesses we discerned in the report included:

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documentation to support such a thesis. (As will be documented later in this letter, the premise appears to be directly contrary to the facts.)

- While discussing Newark's population figures, the report notes ~~that~~ ^{the} 58.2 percent Black residents, the 22.0 percent white residents, and the 18.6 percent residents of Spanish ~~(a total of 98.8 percent)~~ origin, but for some unexplained reason, suggests that another 18.4 percent of the ^{resident} population ~~are~~ ^{is} classified as other ("mostly Asian and Pacific Islanders"), a suggestion unsupported by any U.S. Census data we have seen.

- There is no suggestion that Newark's low income population

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For example, 17.1 percent of employed residents ~~#~~ 16 years of age or over who were counted by the U.S. Census Bureau in ~~1977~~ ^{in 1979} the 73 Census tracts with the most Black residents were working in managerial and professional specialty occupations ^(during 1979) (9,782 individuals of a total of 57,319).

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One function of leadership is to defend the legitimate aspects of Newark which are positive. As the report itself notes often, it is important that community leaders, elected officials, and others with a stake in Newark's future work to protect Newark's image from distortions and prejudices.

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(Echoes of this ^{bias} can be found in the current report: "Ironbound provides a model of a healthy

neighborhood. It's health is the cumulative result of many social and economic factors -- most rooted in the cultural traditions of the area's residents... In areas where the culture and families do not include these community-oriented values and commitments among the majority of residents, a new spirit of commitment and cohesion must be created." (Pg. 32)

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(5)

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Sincerely

D.T.
Councilman-at-large.

